THE PLAYA DEL REY MOTORDROME

World's First Automobile Board Track

Technical Specifications & Engineering Analysis

Corrected Historical Documentation

LOCATION

Playa del Rey, California
Between Ballona Creek (south) and Fiji Way (north)
(Now within Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve, Area A, overlapping Ballona Flood Control Channel)

OPERATIONAL PERIOD

April 8, 1910 – August 11, 1913
3 years, 4 months

Report Date: January 25, 2026
Based on primary source documentation: Los Angeles Times, January 28, 1910

Table of Contents

Table of Contents 2
Executive Summary 4
Historical Context 5
  Key Participants 5
Technical Specifications 6
  Complete Facility Specifications 6
Engineering Calculations 8
  Lumber Weight Calculations 8
  Material Volume Calculations 8
  Construction Rate Analysis 9
Infrastructure and Support Facilities 10
  Transportation Infrastructure 10
  Track Safety and Support Infrastructure 10
  Aviation Facilities (Shared Use) 10
Racing Performance and Records 12
  Speed Records 12
  Notable Competitors 12
  Opening Week Attendance 12
The Wetlands Question: How Was This Built? 13
  Land Transformation Timeline (1902–1910) 13
  Engineering Factors Enabling Construction 13
  Historical Wetlands Context 14
Historical Significance and Legacy 15
  Pioneering Innovations 15
  Board Track Racing Era (1910–1931) 15
  Safety Legacy: The “Murderdrome” Era 15
  Cultural Impact 15
Facility Teardown and Salvage Operations (December 1913) 17
Primary Source Documentation 18
  Los Angeles Times, January 28, 1910 18
  Key Specifications from Primary Source 19
Conclusion 20

References and Sources 21
Primary Sources 21
Secondary Sources 21
Additional Resources 21
Appendix A: Geographic Documentation and Precise Location Evidence 22
Critical Geographic Determination: Area A vs. Area B 22
Primary Archival Sources 22
1. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Aerial Photography (December 1955) 22
1A. UCSB Fairchild Aerial Photography Collection (August 1927) 23
2. Los Angeles Department of Public Works Engineering Maps 24
3. USGS Topographic Map (Historical) 24
Geographic Coordinate Analysis 25
Archival Source Summary Table 25
Marina del Rey Fill Volumes: Correcting a Common Misconception 26
Conclusion: Definitive Geographic Determination 27

Executive Summary

The Playa del Rey Motordrome, constructed in early 1910 in what is now the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve, was the world's first purpose-built automobile board track. This report presents corrected technical specifications based on primary source documentation from the Los Angeles Times (January 28, 1910), revealing that previous historical accounts significantly underestimated the scale of construction.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Lumber quantity:** 3,000,000 board feet (50% more than previously documented)
- **Total structural weight:** 3,125–3,750 tons of lumber plus 28 tons of nails
- **Construction timeline:** 67 calendar days from contract award to opening day
- **Spectator capacity:** 40,000 total (12,000 in covered grandstand)
- **Track specifications:** 1-mile circumference, 45-foot structural width, 18–20° banking

Historical Context

In the early 20th century, America was experiencing an automotive revolution. The Playa del Rey Motordrome emerged at the intersection of this cultural phenomenon and Southern California's emerging identity as the nation's automobile capital. Designed by Jack Prince, a pre-eminent velodrome constructor, and promoted by Hungarian mechanical engineer Frederick Moskovics, the facility scaled European bicycle velodrome technology to accommodate automobile racing for the first time.

Key Participants

Role	Individual/Details
Designer	Jack Prince – Pre-eminent velodrome constructor
Promoter	Frederick Moskovics – Hungarian mechanical engineer, Remy Electric employee
Contractor	Henry X. Goetz – Santa Monica contractor (previously built Venice Canals in 30 days, 1905)
Principal Investor	Frank Garbutt – Vice President, Automobile Club of Southern California

Technical Specifications

The following specifications are verified from primary source documentation (Los Angeles Times, January 28, 1910) and contemporaneous accounts from the facility's operational period.

Complete Facility Specifications

Specification	Value
TRACK SPECIFICATIONS	
Track Circumference	**1 mile (5,280 feet / 1.609 km)**
Track Structural Width	**45 feet (13.7 meters)**
Racing Surface Width	~25 feet (7.6 meters) usable racing lane
Banking Angle	3:1 pitch (~18°), with sections up to 20–25°
Outer Rim Height	25 feet (7.6 meters) above ground level
Track Surface	2" × 4" pine planks on edge, coated with glue and crushed seashells
CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS	
Total Lumber	**3,000,000 board feet**
Lumber Volume	250,000 cubic feet (7,079 cubic meters)
Lumber Weight	**6,250,000–7,500,000 lbs (3,125–3,750 tons)**
Nails	**28 tons (56,000 pounds)**
Total Structural Weight	**3,153–3,778 tons (minimum estimate)**
SPECTATOR FACILITIES	
Total Seating Capacity	**40,000 spectators**
Covered Grandstand	12,000 seats, 1,000 feet long
Open Bleachers	28,000 seats, 2,000 feet total length
CONSTRUCTION TIMELINE	
Contract Awarded	January 27, 1910
Construction Commenced	Monday, January 31, 1910
Opening Day	April 8, 1910
Total Construction Period	**67 calendar days**

Facility Destroyed by Fire	August 11, 1913
Operational Period	3 years, 4 months, 3 days

Engineering Calculations

Based on verified specifications from the Los Angeles Times (January 28, 1910), the following engineering calculations demonstrate the true scale of the Motordrome construction project.

Lumber Weight Calculations

Given:

- Primary source specification: 3,000,000 board feet of lumber
- Pine density: 25–30 pounds per cubic foot
- Conversion: 1 board foot = 144 cubic inches = 0.083 cubic feet

Calculation:

Step 1: Convert board feet to cubic feet	**Step 2: Calculate weight range**
3,000,000 board feet × 0.083 = 250,000 cubic feet	Low: 250,000 × 25 = 6,250,000 lbs High: 250,000 × 30 = 7,500,000 lbs
Result: 3,125–3,750 tons of lumber Plus 28 tons of nails = 3,153–3,778 total tons	

Material Volume Calculations

Material	Quantity	Weight
Pine Lumber	3,000,000 board feet	**3,125–3,750 tons**
Nails	56,000 pounds	**28 tons**
TOTAL MINIMUM STRUCTURAL WEIGHT		**3,153–3,778 tons**

Note: *This calculation represents lumber and nails only. The actual total facility weight was significantly higher when including the grandstand framework, bleacher structures, guard rails, and support infrastructure.*

Construction Rate Analysis

The construction timeline demonstrates remarkable efficiency. Using the verified 67-calendar-day period from contract award (January 27) to opening (April 8), accounting for a major windstorm delay on February 14 that destroyed 600 feet of framework:

Construction Metric	Rate
Lumber installed per day (67 calendar days)	**44,776 board feet/day**
Lumber weight installed per day	**46.6–56.0 tons/day**
Linear feet of track surface per day (1 mile = 5,280 ft)	**78.8 feet/day**
Nails driven per day	**~836 pounds/day**

Infrastructure and Support Facilities

Transportation Infrastructure

The Motordrome's success depended on sophisticated transportation infrastructure designed to move 40,000 spectators efficiently:

System	Details
Railway Spur	Los Angeles Pacific Railway dedicated spur line: 0.736 miles long, branching 1.12 miles from Playa del Rey Station. Capacity: 40,000 spectators per hour.
Roadway Access	"Speedway" (later Culver Boulevard) – gravel road connecting to Venice and downtown Los Angeles. Secured by Frank Garbutt through Automobile Club of Southern California.
Ticket Pricing	Round-trip rail fare from downtown Los Angeles: 40 cents (less than half a day's wage for typical workers, making events accessible to broad demographic).

Track Safety and Support Infrastructure

- **Steel guard rails:** 40 tons of 50-lb steel T rails (verified from December 1913 salvage documentation), upper and lower track edges
- **Safety perimeter:** 30-foot-wide strip of compacted disintegrated granite surrounding track
- **Spectator barrier:** Infield safety fence positioned 125 feet from track edge
- **Pit facilities:** Quarter-mile section with dozen individual pit stalls, 300-foot paddock
- **Access tunnels:** Two cement-lined subway passages beneath track (one pedestrian, one automobile)
- **Night racing capability:** Dedicated electrical generating plant ($10,000 investment) for electric arc lighting system

Aviation Facilities (Shared Use)

The Motordrome grounds were shared with the Aero Club of California, creating a unique dual-purpose entertainment venue:

- **Aircraft hangar:** Capacity for 14 aircraft
- **Machine shop:** Equipped with lathes for aircraft construction and repair
- **Runway:** One-third-mile runway within Motordrome infield
- **Notable aviators:** Lincoln Beachey, Howard Gill

Racing Performance and Records

Speed Records

Date	Driver/Rider	Vehicle	Speed/Record
May 1911	Eddie “Texas Cyclone” Hasha	Motorcycle	**95 mph**
Dec 1912	Lee Humiston	Excelsior motorcycle	**100+ mph**
April 8–9, 1911	Valentine Hust / Frank Verbeck	Fiat	**24-hour endurance:** 1,491 miles @ 62.125 mph avg

Notable Competitors

The Motordrome attracted the era’s most celebrated racing drivers:

- **Barney Oldfield** – National champion, competed in opening series
- **Ralph De Palma** – Future Indianapolis 500 winner
- **Caleb Bragg** – Scored upset victory over Oldfield during opening week
- **Eddie Hasha** – Motorcycle speed record holder

Opening Week Attendance

Date	Attendance
Friday, April 8, 1910 (Opening Day)	**10,000 spectators**
Saturday, April 9, 1910 (Day 2)	**12,000 spectators**
Wednesday, April 13, 1910 (Midweek)	**4,000 spectators**

The Wetlands Question: How Was This Built?

The Motordrome's location within what is today designated as the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve raises an important engineering question: how was a 3,750-ton structure built in 67 days on wetlands terrain? Historical evidence provides a clear answer: the site underwent extensive transformation between 1902 and 1910, converting seasonal wetlands into buildable land.

Land Transformation Timeline (1902–1910)

Period	Development Activities
June 1902	**Beach Land Company formation:** Moses Sherman, Eli Clark, Henry P. Barbour begin Playa del Rey resort development
1902–1904	**Major earthwork:** ~700,000 cubic yards of sand excavated and moved to create Del Rey Lagoon and level building sites. "Six hundred acres of sand beach, rolling dunes and lofty bluffs were graded and prepared for building" (Los Angeles Times, 1902)
Nov 1902	**Railway infrastructure:** Los Angeles Pacific Railway "Redondo Beach via Playa del Rey" line completed. Railway embankments alter natural drainage patterns
1902–1910	**Comprehensive infrastructure:** Sewer systems, water distribution, electric lighting, sidewalks, roadways installed throughout development area
1910	**Site-specific drainage:** Dedicated drainage channel dredged from Motordrome site to ensure dry conditions for track construction

Engineering Factors Enabling Construction

1. **Elevated construction methodology:** The track's outer rim rose 25 feet above ground level, functioning as an elevated platform rather than ground-level structure. Weight distributed across framework of posts and beams, similar to bridge trestle engineering.
2. **Eight years of site preparation:** By January 1910, the area had benefited from extensive drainage improvements, fill placement, and infrastructure development conducted for the Playa del Rey resort.
3. **Seasonal timing:** Construction occurred during Southern California's dry season (late January–early April). Historical ecology research confirms that Ballona Creek and tributary streams were intermittent, flowing only during winter rainy periods.
4. **Natural site characteristics:** The Motordrome location occupied middle-elevation terrain (not the lowest wetlands areas) with naturally porous alluvial soils providing drainage advantages.

5. **No deep foundations required:** Contemporary documentation makes no reference to driven pilings or deep foundation systems typical of wetland construction. The 67-day timeline would have been impossible with extensive foundation work.

Historical Wetlands Context

Scientific analysis (Henrickson 1991) documents that the Ballona watershed supported approximately 14,149 acres of wetlands during 1850–1890, with 80% of stream channels being intermittent or discontinuous. Many wetlands were seasonal, transforming into dry or damp ground during summer/fall. The Motordrome site, while within this broader wetland system, had been systematically drained and developed for eight years before track construction commenced.

The most dramatic wetlands alterations occurred after the Motordrome's 1913 destruction: Ballona Creek straightening (1920s), concrete lining and levee construction (1930s), and Marina del Rey development (1950s–1960s). The Marina del Rey project required 3.5 million cubic yards of fill total; of this, 1,557,000 cubic yards (Fill Area F-14) was deposited in what is now Ballona Wetlands Area A.

Historical Significance and Legacy

Pioneering Innovations

6. **First automobile board track:** The Motordrome was the world's first purpose-built automobile board track, proving that European bicycle velodrome technology could be successfully scaled for motorized racing.
7. **Night racing capability:** The dedicated electrical generating plant for electric arc lighting was innovative for 1910, enabling evening events and 24-hour endurance races.
8. **Mass transportation integration:** The dedicated Pacific Electric Railway spur with 40,000-spectator-per-hour capacity demonstrated sophisticated logistics planning decades before modern stadium design.
9. **Banking angle innovation:** The 18–25° banking enabled sustained speeds exceeding 100 mph, establishing design principles later adopted by Indianapolis Motor Speedway and subsequent board tracks.

Board Track Racing Era (1910–1931)

The Motordrome initiated a nationwide board track boom. By 1929, at least 24 board track facilities operated across the United States. However, economic pressures from the Great Depression combined with high maintenance costs led to rapid abandonment: by 1931, only 4 of the 24 tracks remained operational. Development of improved concrete and asphalt paving technologies in the 1930s permanently rendered board track construction obsolete.

Safety Legacy: The "Murderdrome" Era

Board track racing quickly earned a reputation for extreme danger. The deteriorating pine surface produced splinters "the size of kitchen knives" that flew into drivers and spectators at high speed. The steep banking created substantial risk – vehicles traveling below 100 mph on severely banked sections risked sliding down the track or being thrown over the outer rail.

The term "murderdrome" gained nationwide usage following high-profile fatal accidents, particularly Eddie Hasha's 1912 crash at Newark, New Jersey that killed the rider and four spectators. These safety concerns, combined with rapid track deterioration requiring continuous maintenance, contributed to the board track era's relatively brief existence.

Cultural Impact

The Motordrome contributed to Southern California's emerging identity as America's automobile culture capital, a reputation that shaped regional development throughout the 20th century. The facility demonstrated that motorsports could be viable commercial entertainment when properly financed and marketed, establishing precedents for

spectator infrastructure, franchising concepts, and rapid-construction methodologies that influenced subsequent facilities including the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Facility Teardown and Salvage Operations (December 1913)

Primary Source Evidence:

Four months after the August 11, 1913 fire, the Pacific Electric Railway Company initiated formal salvage operations to recover usable materials from the destroyed Motordrome structure. A trade journal notice published in the *Southwest Contractor & Manufacturer* (December 13, 1913, page 14, column 2) provides definitive documentation of salvageable materials:

SALVAGE MATERIALS INVENTORY (DECEMBER 1913)	
Material Type	**Quantity / Specification**
Salvageable Lumber	**1,750,000 feet (board feet)**
Steel T Rails (Guard Rails)	**40 tons (50-lb per yard specification)**
Folding Chairs (Grandstand Seating)	**120 dozen (1,440 individual folding chairs)**

Material Recovery Analysis:

Material	Original Quantity	Salvaged Quantity
Lumber	3,000,000 board feet	**1,750,000 board feet (58.3%)**
Loss/Destruction	*1,250,000 board feet (41.7%) destroyed by fire or unsuitable for salvage*	

Salvage Operations Management:

The Pacific Electric Railway Company, through C.H. Burnett (Manager of Outside Operations), solicited bids for wrecking and salvaging the Motordrome structure. The December 13, 1913 notice specified that *"Bids will be received separately on the various materials,"* indicating that lumber, steel rails, and chairs were sold as distinct lots to maximize salvage value.

Engineering Implications:

- **Material Loss Rate:** The 58.3% lumber recovery rate (1.75M salvaged from 3M original) represents a 41.7% loss to fire damage, deterioration, and materials unsuitable for reuse

- **Steel Rail Specification:** The 40 tons of 50-lb T rails confirms substantial steel infrastructure for guard rails along track edges, representing approximately 1,600 linear feet of double-rail installation (assuming both inner and outer track edges)
- **Seating Infrastructure:** The 1,440 folding chairs (120 dozen) confirms premium seating in the covered grandstand, representing approximately 12% of the 12,000-seat grandstand capacity as individual folding chairs rather than bench seating
- **Timeline Verification:** The December 1913 salvage notice, appearing exactly 4 months after the August 11, 1913 fire, confirms rapid decision-making by facility owners not to rebuild

Historical Significance:

This December 1913 trade journal notice provides the only known contemporary documentation of salvage operations and material recovery from the destroyed Motordrome. The Pacific Electric Railway Company's role in managing the teardown reflects the close operational relationship between the railway and the racing facility. The rapid 4-month timeline from fire (August 11, 1913) to salvage operations (December 1913) indicates that reconstruction was ruled out quickly, likely due to deteriorating board track economics, safety concerns, and the facility's damaged condition.

Primary Source Documentation

This report's specifications are based on primary source documentation from the Los Angeles Times, January 28, 1910, which announced the contract award to H.X. Goetz. The article, published contemporaneously with the actual construction contract, provides the most authoritative specifications available.

Los Angeles Times, January 28, 1910

Full Text (ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times, pg. II10):

CONTRACT IS AWARDED.

Santa Monica Man Will Erect Automobile Race Track, Grand Stand and Bleachers.

SANTA MONICA, Jan. 27— H. X. Goetz was today awarded the contract for the construction of the automobile race track and grand stand and bleachers to be erected one and one-half miles back of Playa del Rey. Work is to be commenced Monday morning. The grading is now being done. The track, which is to be forty-five feet wide, will be built of 2x4 timbers placed edge to edge. About 3,000,000 feet of lumber will be used in the work and twenty-eight tons of nails will be

required. The grand stand is to have a length of 1000 feet, and there will be bleachers of twice that length.

Santa Monica's Pompano baseball team will play its first league game on the home grounds next Sunday, the beach nine having been admitted to membership in the Southern California Association. The opposing nine will be the Racycles of Los Angeles.

Key Specifications from Primary Source

Specification	As Published January 28, 1910
Contractor	H. X. Goetz
Contract Award Date	January 27, 1910
Construction Start	"Monday morning" (January 31, 1910)
Location	"One and one-half miles back of Playa del Rey"
Track Width	**"Forty-five feet wide"**
Construction Material	"2x4 timbers placed edge to edge"
Total Lumber	**"About 3,000,000 feet of lumber"**
Nails	**"Twenty-eight tons of nails"**
Grandstand Length	"1000 feet"
Bleacher Length	"Twice that length" (2,000 feet)

Conclusion

The Playa del Rey Motordrome represents a remarkable achievement in early 20th-century American engineering and entrepreneurship. Primary source documentation from the Los Angeles Times (January 28, 1910) reveals that previous historical accounts significantly underestimated the construction scale: the facility utilized 3,000,000 board feet of lumber (not 2,000,000), resulting in a minimum structural weight of 3,153–3,778 tons.

The construction timeline demonstrates extraordinary efficiency. Contractor H.X. Goetz erected this massive structure in just 67 calendar days (January 31 to April 8, 1910), including recovery from a severe windstorm on February 14 that destroyed 600 feet of completed framework. This achievement was possible due to:

- Elevated construction methodology distributing weight across a trestle-like framework
- Eight years of site preparation (1902–1910) transforming seasonal wetlands into buildable land
- Strategic timing during Southern California's dry season
- Modular prefabricated lumber construction requiring no concrete curing or masonry settling

The Motordrome's legacy extends far beyond its brief 3-year operational period. As the world's first automobile board track, it established design principles and demonstrated commercial viability that influenced American motorsports for two decades. The facility contributed to Southern California's emerging identity as America's automobile culture capital, a reputation that shaped regional development throughout the 20th century.

Today, the Motordrome site lies within the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve (Area A, overlapping the Ballona Flood Control Channel; railroad infrastructure was in Area B), where restoration efforts seek to return portions of the landscape to conditions similar to the pre-1900 wetlands ecosystem. This ironic twist – transforming developed land back into wetlands – mirrors the reverse transformation that occurred between 1902 and 1910, enabling the Motordrome's construction on what had previously been seasonal wetlands terrain.

The Playa del Rey Motordrome stands as testament to an era when ambitious entrepreneurs could transform challenging landscapes and construct massive facilities in timeframes that seem inconceivable by modern standards – a genuine engineering marvel in the Ballona wetlands.

References and Sources

Primary Sources

Los Angeles Times. “Contract Is Awarded: Santa Monica Man Will Erect Automobile Race Track, Grand Stand and Bleachers.” January 28, 1910, pg. II10. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1881-1990).

Southwest Contractor & Manufacturer. "Auto Racing—Playa del Rey: Wreck motordrome." December 13, 1913, page 14, column 2. Trade journal notice documenting salvage materials from facility teardown: 1,750,000 feet of lumber, 40 tons of 50-lb steel T rails, and 120 dozen folding chairs. Los Angeles Public Library.

Secondary Sources

Wikipedia. “Playa del Rey Motordrome.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_Angeles_Motordrome
Abandoned & Little-Known Airfields. “Airfields in Western Los Angeles County.” https://www.airfields-freeman.com/CA/Airfields_CA_LA_W.htm
SoCal Architectural History. “First Board Track Opened at Playa del Rey Motordrome.” https://socalarchhistory.blogspot.com/2011/03/first-board-track-opened-at-los-angeles.html
The Classic Machines. “Murderdrome: The Dangerous World of Board Track Racing.” https://theclassicmachines.com/2022/05/04/murderdrome/
Henrickson, Matthew M. 1991. “Historical Ecology and Landscape Transformations in the Ballona Watershed.” Center for Urban Forest Research.

Additional Resources

The Henry Ford Museum. Digital Collections. Artifact #377236. https://www.thehenryford.org/collections-and-research/digital-collections/artifact/377236/
First Super Speedway. Photo Gallery: Racing at Playa del Rey, 1910. https://www.firstsuperspeedway.com/photo-gallery/racing-playa-del-rey-1910
Ballona Wetlands Historical Photos and Documentation. Various sources archived at Internet Archive and local historical societies.

Appendix A: Geographic Documentation and Precise Location Evidence

This appendix presents definitive archival evidence establishing the precise geographic location of the Playa del Rey Motordrome within the current Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve boundary. Through analysis of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers aerial photography, Los Angeles Department of Public Works engineering maps, Pacific Electric Railway track maps, and USGS topographic surveys, the facility's exact footprint and relationship to current restoration project areas can be conclusively determined.

Critical Geographic Determination: Area A vs. Area B

BALLONA WETLANDS RESTORATION PROJECT AREAS	
Location/Feature	**Restoration Project Area**
Playa del Rey Motordrome Racing Track (circular structure, 1-mile circumference)	**AREA A (overlapping Ballona Flood Control Channel)**
Pacific Electric Railway Double Tracks (Culver Boulevard alignment)	**AREA B**
Motordrome Station (Pacific Electric Railway)	**AREA B**
Railway Spur Line to Motordrome	**AREA B**

Primary Archival Sources

1. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Aerial Photography (December 1955)

Archival Reference:

- **Document:** File No. 2243A, Plate 2
- **Date:** Aerial Photography of 8 December 1955
- **Title:** River and Harbor Improvement, Playa del Rey Inlet and Harbor, Venice, California
- **Source:** Office of the District Engineer, Los Angeles, California
- **Scale:** Aerial Mosaic of Harbor Area

Geographic Evidence Provided:

This 1955 aerial photograph, taken 42 years after the Motordrome's destruction, provides crucial evidence of the facility's location. The photograph clearly shows the

Motordrome site's relationship to the unchannelized Ballona Creek. The circular track was positioned:

- **North:** Undeveloped wetlands extending northward to approximately Fiji Way (later became Marina del Rey harbor development area)
- **South:** Unchannelized Ballona Creek (southern edge of track overlapped the creek); Culver Boulevard is south of the track; Jefferson Boulevard is further south in Area B (railway station area)
- **East:** Playa del Rey residential development and coastal bluffs
- **West:** Open wetlands terrain extending toward Pacific Ocean
- **Rail Access:** Pacific Electric Railway right-of-way (later Culver Boulevard) located south of the track, with spur line providing access to the facility

Critical Finding: The circular track footprint visible in the 1955 aerial photograph corresponds precisely to the current boundary of Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve Area A, with the southern portion of the track overlapping the unchannelized Ballona Creek alignment.

1A. UCSB Fairchild Aerial Photography Collection (August 1927)

Archival Reference:

- **Document:** UCSB Fairchild Aerial Photography Collection, C-113_45
- **Date:** August 1, 1927
- **Coverage:** Ballona wetlands area showing Fill Areas F-9, F-10, F-11, F-12, F-13, and F-14
- **Source:** UC Santa Barbara Library, Department of Geography, Fairchild Aerial Photography Collection

Geographic Evidence Provided:

This August 1, 1927 aerial photograph, taken 14 years after the Motordrome's destruction and 28 years before the 1955 U.S. Army Corps photo, provides **critical intermediate documentation** of the site's condition. The photograph clearly shows:

- **Motordrome Footprint Visible:** The circular track depression/shadow remains visible in the landscape despite 14 years of abandonment
- **Fill Area F-14 Location:** The footprint is clearly within Fill Area F-14, which corresponds to current Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve Area A
- **Unchannelized Ballona Creek:** The photograph shows the Motordrome site at the end of the unchannelized Ballona Creek, before the 1920s-1930s straightening and concrete lining project
- **Erosion Pattern:** The footprint shows wash-out patterns from several years of heavy rains following the 1913 fire and teardown, creating a depression in the landscape
- **Adjacent Fill Areas:** The aerial clearly delineates multiple fill areas (F-9 through F-14) associated with subsequent Marina del Rey development planning

Historical Significance:

This 1927 photograph represents the **only known intermediate aerial documentation** between the Motordrome's 1913 destruction and the 1950s Marina del Rey development. The visible footprint/shadow confirms:

- The substantial earthwork and structural modification created by the 3,500-ton facility left a persistent landscape signature visible for at least 14 years
- The site's location in Fill Area F-14, which received 1,557,000 cubic yards of fill during the 1950s-1960s Marina del Rey development
- The relationship between the unchannelized Ballona Creek and the Motordrome site before major hydrological modifications
- Natural erosion patterns that created a washed-out depression where the circular track once stood

2. Los Angeles Department of Public Works Engineering Maps

Archival Reference:

- **Document:** Filed Map 10224, Plate 13 - Del Rey Redondo Line
- **Date:** 1928
- **Additional Map:** Field Map 10224, Plate A13 of 29
- **Source:** LA Department of Public Works, 1928

Geographic Evidence Provided:

These engineering maps, created 15 years after the Motordrome's destruction, preserve precise survey data showing:

- **Precise Location of the Playa del Rey Motordrome:** Circular track outline with surveyed dimensions
- **Pacific Electric Railway Double Tracks:** Shown along Culver Boulevard alignment (southern boundary, with spur line accessing the Motordrome from the south)
- **Street Designations:** "Del Rey" (now Culver Boulevard) and "Playa Street" (now Jefferson Boulevard)
- **Property Boundaries:** Detailed parcel boundaries showing relationship to railroad right-of-way

Annotation Detail:

The maps contain the notation *"Tom McMahon 2021-03-16"* and *"Tom McMahon 2018-08-14,"* indicating modern geospatial analysis overlay work performed by historical researcher Tom McMahon, who precisely georeferenced the historical engineering drawings to contemporary coordinate systems.

3. USGS Topographic Map (Historical)

Archival Reference:

- **Map Period:** 1911-1913 (during Motordrome operational period)
- **Features Shown:** "One Mile Track," "Pacific Speedway," "Motordrome Station," "Electric" railway
- **Topographic Features:** Contour lines showing wetlands terrain, Ballona Lagoon, coastal dunes

Geographic Evidence Provided:

This contemporaneous USGS topographic survey shows the Motordrome as *"One Mile Track"* positioned in open terrain between Playa del Rey residential development (to the west) and the Ballona wetlands (to the east). The map clearly shows:

- **Topographic Context:** Mid-elevation terrain (approximately 15-25 feet above sea level)
- **Railway Infrastructure:** Electric railway alignment with "Motordrome Station" marked
- **Road Access:** "Pacific Speedway" (later Culver Boulevard) providing automobile access
- **Wetlands Features:** Ballona Lagoon and coastal wetlands clearly delineated east of track location

Geographic Coordinate Analysis

Based on georeferenced archival maps and modern aerial photography overlay analysis, the approximate geographic coordinates of the Playa del Rey Motordrome center point are:

Coordinate System	Coordinates (Approximate Track Center)
Decimal Degrees	**33.9567° N, 118.4397° W (approximate)**
Current Address Reference	Between Ballona Flood Control Channel (south) and Fiji Way (north), within Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve Area A
Track Diameter	Approximately 1,680 feet (1-mile circumference = 5,280 feet ÷ π)

Archival Source Summary Table

Source Type	Date	Archive	Reference ID
Aerial Photography	December 8, 1955	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	File No. 2243A, Plate 2

Engineering Maps	1928	LA Dept. Public Works	Filed Map 10224, Plate 13 & A13
USGS Topographic Map	1911-1913	U.S. Geological Survey	Historical Topo Series

Marina del Rey Fill Volumes: Correcting a Common Misconception

Critical Engineering Specification:

A common misconception in historical documentation erroneously states that 3.5 million cubic yards of fill was deposited in Ballona Wetlands Area A during the Marina del Rey development (1950s–1960s). This is **incorrect**.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers documentation establishes the precise fill volumes:

MARINA DEL REY DEVELOPMENT FILL VOLUMES	
Fill Area / Project Component	**Volume (cubic yards)**
Fill Area F-14 (Ballona Wetlands Area A)	**1,557,000 cu. yd.**
Total Marina del Rey Project (All Areas)	**3,500,000 cu. yd.**
Percentage Deposited in Area A	**44.5% of total project fill**

Primary Source Documentation:

- **Document 1:** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers "OCI-CIV-60-5_Playa" – Documents Fill Area F-14 specifications
- **Document 2:** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers "Playa del Rey Harbor CIVENG-04-353-60-5" – Confirms Fill Area F-14 volume of 1,557,000 cubic yards

Engineering Significance:

The distinction between the total Marina del Rey project fill volume (3.5 million cubic yards) and the pro-rated amount deposited specifically in Ballona Wetlands Area A (1,557,000 cubic yards, Fill Area F-14) is critical for:

- **Restoration Planning:** Accurate assessment of fill removal requirements for wetlands restoration in Area A
- **Historical Accuracy:** Correcting misconceptions about the scale of development impact on the Motordrome site

- **Engineering Analysis:** Proper attribution of fill volumes to specific geographic areas within the larger Marina del Rey development
- **Environmental Review:** Accurate baseline conditions for CEQA/NEPA environmental impact assessment

Geographic Context:

The Marina del Rey development transformed approximately 800+ acres of coastal wetlands and created a 5,300-slip harbor. The 3.5 million cubic yards of fill was distributed across multiple areas:

- **Fill Area F-14 (Area A):** 1,557,000 cu. yd. – The location of the former Playa del Rey Motordrome
- **Other Fill Areas:** Approximately 1,943,000 cu. yd. distributed across the remaining Marina del Rey development footprint

Elevation Change Analysis:

The 1,557,000 cubic yards of fill in Area A raised ground elevations from historical wetlands level (approximately 2-8 feet above sea level) to the current elevation of 9-17 feet above mean sea level. This represents an average elevation gain of 7-9 feet across the approximately 100-acre Fill Area F-14 footprint.

Conclusion: Definitive Geographic Determination

Through comprehensive analysis of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers aerial photography, Los Angeles Department of Public Works engineering maps, and USGS topographic surveys, the precise location of the Playa del Rey Motordrome has been conclusively established:

DEFINITIVE GEOGRAPHIC FINDING

The Playa del Rey Motordrome racing facility was located in

BALLONA WETLANDS ECOLOGICAL RESERVE AREA A

Between Ballona Creek (south) and Fiji Way (north)

The circular track overlapped the Ballona Flood Control Channel

Pacific Electric Railway infrastructure (tracks, station, spur line) was located in Area B

This geographic determination is supported by multiple independent archival sources spanning a 44-year period (1911-1955) and represents the most authoritative documentation of the facility's precise location currently available.

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End of Report